

Controversy over wedding grips Crystal Springs

CRYSTAL SPRINGS, Miss. (BP and local reports) — The inability of an African American couple to wed at predominantly white First Church in Crystal Springs has created widespread uproar but is not indicative of Southern Baptists, denominational leaders said.

The pastor's decision to change the wedding venue, after a few members' reaction because of the couple's race, is an unfortunate, isolated incident from which

pastors can learn, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Fred Luter said.

"We just have to be aware that the enemy will use anything he can to come against our churches and our ministries with something like this, and so we've always got to be aware that the enemy is out to kill, steal and destroy," said Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans and the first African American elected as SBC president.

"It's unfortunate that it happened, but we've got to learn from it, and be able to go on and do what God has called us to do. What we can learn from it is that we need to talk to our membership about issues. I think if the pastor would have talked to more members about this... when this situation occurred... it probably would not have happened the way it happened."

Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in

Jackson, said, "Our entire country, and especially here in Mississippi, has been on a long journey for right racial relationships. Mississippi Baptists both reject racial discrimination and at the same time respect the autonomy of our local churches to deal with difficulties and disagreements under the Lordship of Jesus."

see CONTROVERSY on p. 4



VIEW FROM THE TOP — International Mission Board missionary Doug Shaw, who is serving as Southern Baptist volunteer coordinator for the Summer Olympics, looks out over the site of Olympic Park in London as it was being prepared for the 2012 Games. (BP photo)

Missionary couple supervising London's Olympics volunteers

LONDON (BP) — Doug Shaw points out the wave-shaped roof of the 2012 Olympic aquatics center as he looks across the tracks from Platform 4B at London's Stratford railway station. In the distance, the triangulated exterior of the main Olympic stadium is visible.

The Olympic Park has been a rapidly developing scene for passengers who commute daily through this station to other parts of London and beyond.

They've also watched renovations at the station that have boosted capacity to prepare for the tens of thousands of international visitors who will travel to the Olympic Park each day during the 2012 Games. The station will operate around the clock, with a capacity for 250,000 people daily, said Shaw, an International Mission

Board missionary who has become something of an expert on the logistics of how the Olympic Games operate.

Shaw, who has served in Poland and London with his wife Marcy, is the Olympics volunteer coordinator for Southern Baptists. The real reason the Shaws moved to London, however, was not the global sporting event, but the internationalists themselves — in particular, the Polish population now living in London.

Just standing on this station platform or walking down a nearby road reveals the multicultural reality of London today, with immigrants from nearly every country imaginable making this city their home.

On Stratford's High Street — the British equivalent of an American Main Street — East-

ern European women push babies in strollers, and covered women draped with headscarves carry shopping bags home. Faces reflecting a variety of ethnicities and nationalities run to catch buses, read in the public library, and work in the restaurants and shops in this east London community.

Shaw knows the area well. He has frequented Stratford to observe various stages of the Olympic grounds development as he planned for the hundreds of volunteers who will come to be a part of the Southern Baptist volunteer force assisting during the Olympics. However, that's just part of his job.

Before relocating to London in 2008 to reach out to the

see OLYMPICS on p. 7

Leaders call for support of Nigerian Christians

WASHINGTON (BP) — Voices from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean are calling for the United States government to do more to protect Nigeria's Christians from the Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram.

Nigerian Christian leaders requested American help on a recent visit to Washington, and the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy entity urged members of Congress to support legislation requiring the State Department to report on whether Boko Haram qualifies for classification as a "foreign terrorist organization" (FTO).

Boko Haram and its associates have killed more than 1,000 people in the west African country during the last 18 months, according to the State Department. Boko Haram took credit for July 7-8 attacks that killed about 100 members of the Church of Christ in Nigeria, including 50 who had taken refuge in a pastor's home, according to Open Doors News.

Last year, more than 765 churches were destroyed in the country, a Nigerian spokesman said.

Speaking at a July 12 Washington briefing, the president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) said the problem is a "jihadist, fundamentalist ideology."

Boko Haram "basically is a group that believes Nigeria should operate on Shariah law," Ayodele Joseph Oritsejafor said. "And they want to turn Nigeria into a Muslim country — by force. And that's what they've always said."

The militant group has said, "[I]f Christians want peace in Nigeria, they must accept Islam, because Islam is the only religion," Oritsejafor told participants at a briefing sponsored by the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom.



TERROR ALL AROUND — A Nigerian woman prepares food for her family in a remote village in Nigeria. A Muslim extremist group has been terrorizing Christians and destroying churches in the country. (BP photo)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Modern child sacrifice

The offender has been convicted, the president has been removed, the statue has been taken down, and a once-mighty athletic program has been crushed for the foreseeable future. An American institution in every sense of the word, Pennsylvania State University has been brought low — and the nightmare has just started.

We all know the storyline. Jerry Sandusky worked for decades for the school's icon, head football coach Joe Paterno, who himself had been coaching at the university since the 1960s. Sandusky was convicted a few weeks ago of molesting young boys, allegedly using his influence in the athletic department to groom and seduce the children.

The sordid details of what went on in the showers of the athletic department, in the basement of the Sandusky home, on road trips with the Penn State football team, and who knows where else are too repulsive to describe in a family newspaper. Suffice to say that many young lives were irrevocably altered by the evil actions of this man they trusted.

Almost as horrifying as the molestations were the actions taken by university officials at the highest levels to protect the prestige of the university and to keep secure their own jobs and reputations, at the expense of the children.

According to a highly critical report compiled by former Federal Bureau of Investigation head Louie Freeh at the behest of the university, officials at the top of the athletic department and even the university president were aware for many years of Sandusky's sexual exploitation of children on the grounds of the university.

In Freeh's opinion, there was more than enough evidence to move on Sandusky at least a decade ago — and probably much longer. A credible report of a naked Sandusky and an equally naked boy in Penn State athletic department showers should have been enough to prompt athletic leaders and university administrators to action. It didn't.

"Our most saddening and sobering finding is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims by the most senior leaders at Penn State," Freeh said in releasing the report. "The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children who Sandusky victimized."

Can the same be said for some of our churches, our Mississippi Baptist churches? Could we ever hear these words spoken about one of our churches in Mississippi: "Our most saddening and sobering finding is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of the child victims by the most senior leaders of this church."

Let that statement ring in your ears for a little while, and then think about your church. Are there security programs in place whenever children are under the care of your church? Is there a screening process in place to root out sex offenders before they can get access to children? Is there a church staff member (or volunteer in many churches) who is personally responsible for seeing that these measures are in place and utilized?

Churches and schools are teeming with potential victims for pedophiles. Schools have a defined number of teachers and other staffers trained to secure and protect the children in their care, but is the one harried volunteer in your church's preschool department on Sunday morning up to the task of protecting all the children?

Just as importantly, what would you do if you personally witnessed a criminal act against a child on your church's grounds? What if you were told of the criminal act by someone else? Would you sweep it under the rug, as the leaders at Penn State did? Would you report it to law enforcement and child welfare officials, as required by law?

Would you keep quiet to protect the church? Could you be intimidated by "senior leaders" to keep your mouth shut about it? Would you be part of a wide-ranging cover up? Would you stop to consider what's at stake for the church, or would you immediately and instinctively act to protect the child?

These are not flippant questions. Any one of us could happen upon a situation that would momentarily stun us, but what would we do when we came to our senses?

All it took to bring down an American institution was one evil man, and just enough people to cover up his misdeeds. At your church, would you be counted among those who protected the children, or among those who sacrificed the children?

Think about it now, before it happens, and make your decision.

Do you know your church's FQ?

When a church of 120 members set out to assimilate 3,000 converts from a one-day revival into the life of their family, they ranked "fellowship" among the top priorities in accomplishing the task.

The FQ — Fellowship Quotient — of a church speaks to how well the members love the Lord and one another and show hospitality to new believers.

Following are 10 aspects and insights about the FQ of your church. They are worth carving in stone, or better, engraving on the hearts of your leadership and membership.

■ Fellowship is the heartbeat of the congregation. Just as the doctor places a stethoscope up to the chest and listens to the heartbeat, the pulse of the congregation is the sound you hear when church has ended. Pay close attention, friend. This is the life of your people.

■ Fellowship may or may not be what draws people to your church, but it's why they stay. Prospective members may give you a long list of what they're looking for in their next church: strong Bible teaching, a great music or missions program, an emphasis on youth or children.

While they want these things, nothing is more attractive to them than a congregation with a thriving family life — people loving the Lord, each other, and newcomers. They will join that church and remain there even if few other aspects meet their requirements.

■ Fellowship is made up of three parts: a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, a love for fellow believers as friends, and hospitality shown to newcomers.

■ However, the newcomer will notice these three in reverse order: first, hospitality (how they are welcomed), then joy within the family, and finally, that the people are committed to the Lord Jesus.

■ People on the outside are craving this fellowship. We need each other. God made us this way.

■ A wise church works to build a stronger fellowship among its people. Fellowship comes in planned and unplanned versions. The planned variety happens in Sunday School classes, committees, Bible studies, work projects, and at church dinners.

Unplanned fellowship takes place



Guest opinion

with Joe McKeever

casually and naturally before and after classes, studies, and worship services. Informal, unplanned fellowship occurs when members play golf together or go out for pizza after church.

■ The greatest enemy of fellowship in God's people is the human heart. We are all sinners. We tend to be self-centered, independent loners. Even the hearts of believers can grow cold quickly, turn inward naturally, become narcissistic, and delight in cutting itself off those we love best.

■ A dying church will begin to die here first. I see it in some of the churches where I'm the guest preacher. The service ends and everyone heads for the parking lot. No one stays to visit, no one greets the newcomer, no one affirms the leadership. The church is dying right before your eyes.

■ Leadership must value fellowship highly and protect it. Otherwise, it will be supplanted by a thousand lesser things.

■ God loves it when His people love each other, when they get together for encouragement, when they "hang out."

Recently, my wife and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary by flying in our children and grandchildren from around the country for a long weekend of activities. At one point, when everyone was on the back patio, I was struck by the sounds of these 15 people. They were laughing, talking, loving, playing, rejoicing in one another. It was music to Grandpa's ears.

The Father in Heaven loves for His people to get the fellowship thing right.

McKeever is a Baptist Press cartoonist and columnist, a former longtime pastor, and former director of missions for the New Orleans Association.

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Bivocational ministry demanding but rewarding, practitioners say

RICHFIELD, Pa. (BP) — Pusey Losch begins his day in God's Word. Like many men who make a living with their hands, he seeks spiritual preparation for the mental and physical challenges his workday presents.

Losch is a painting contractor — owner/operator — starting his business 32 years ago after seeing an opportunity while laboring as a carpenter in rural Pennsylvania. "I started building houses to make a living. I did that until I figured out I could make a better living with a bucket of paint than a stack of two-by-fours."

While some working men eschew Facebook, Losch checks it regularly. He isn't worried about his status. He's checking on his flock.

Losch is one of the many bivocational pastors serving congregations across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and Canadian National Baptist Conventions. According to data reported in the Annual Church Profile, some 8,000 pastors and associate pastors report being bivocational. Even more bivocational ministers serve as student pastors, worship leaders, and in other roles.

Losch joins men like adjunct professor Martinez "Tez" Andrews and engineer Carlos Soca who work more than 40-hour weeks at their day jobs, give spiritual leadership to their churches, and remain engaged in the lives of their families.

A new phrase, Iron Men of the SBC, coined by Tim Dowdy describes these men. The thought came to the senior pastor after attending a triathlon. He serves as pastor of Eagle's Landing First Church in McDonough, Ga.

"A couple of days later I was in a meeting at NAMB discussing bivocational pastors," said Dowdy, immediate past chairman of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) trustees. "Then it hit me. I thought, 'Most of them don't swim, bike and run, but they are the Iron Men of the SBC.' They hold down full-time jobs, pastor churches and take care of their families."

To raise awareness for the need to help bivocational pastors, Dowdy will participate in his first full triathlon November 3 in Panama City, Fl.

"There are 345 million people in North America, and conservatively 70 to 80 percent still need to come to faith in Christ," said Dowdy. "We need bivocational pastors leading churches. In some urban and rural settings, there may never be a base that can support a full-time pastor."

Losch, Andrews, and Soca

may be in the minority in the SBC, but it is a large one. Only 63% of Southern Baptist congregations are led by full-time pastors, according to Southern Baptist Directory Services.

"We believe the only way for us to have a true church planting movement is to garnish the efforts of bivocational pastors and to train our young people that they, too, can be bivocational," said NAMB president Kevin Ezell.

Ezell recently announced a partnership between Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and NAMB to offer a 33-hour, online master's degree in theology. NAMB will support the effort with Iron Men of the SBC scholarships. NAMB honored bivocational pastors with a luncheon at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans earlier this summer and featured a bivocational pastor in its report to the convention.

A typical day in the life of the average bivocational pastor is anything but typical. "Sermon preparation is probably the toughest. I've been told how I'm supposed to do it and then there is reality. When you work all day, come home and then are up until 1 a.m. counseling someone with serious issues, and you have to be up the next morning for work, sometimes sermon preparation takes a hit. I'll admit it. I've written one or two on my way walking to the pulpit."

Finding family time is daunting, too.

Tez Andrews, father of four sons, ages 13 to two, was hit recently with the sudden need to find a new worship location for his church plant, Connect Church in Decatur, Ga. "I was, of course, concerned about the move. As I was preparing my sermon, God made it clear to me I should focus on my sons, not where the church would meet."

He sensed the Lord prodding him, "Don't worry about the location. Be with your boys. You let me take care of where the church will meet."

Andrews spends 40-50 hours per week in lesson preparation and classroom lectures at Carver College and Belhaven University, both in Atlanta.

Although the calling can be challenging, bivocational pastors have support in the form of The Bivocational and Small Church Leadership Network (BSCLN).

"The BSCLN is the champion of the validity, importance and resourcefulness of the bivocational and smaller membership church pastors," said Ray Gilder, BSCLN national coordinator. "Bivocational pastors

are vital to planting churches across North America. They are double-duty ministers, willing to do whatever it takes to make a difference for Christ in their communities."

Engineer and pastor Carlos Soca appreciates the members at Open Door Church in Raleigh, N.C., where he leads the multi-ethnic congregation's Hispanic ministry. Travel is tough enough leaving his wife and three children behind, so having confidence in men who can step in at services is important.

"I lead the Spanish Fellowships on Sunday and Wednesday evenings," said Soca. "The balance of a professional career, a growing family, and the demands of leading in a congregation are challenging. What do you put your energy and your time into?"

"Recently I was told I was needed the next week in Mexico for a presentation. There is no way to make services when you're out of the country. Thankfully we've developed men who can lead."

Recognizing those challenges, NAMB supports pastors with people like George Garner, who leads Bivocational and Rural Missional Strategies on NAMB's behalf. "Kingdom explosion and spiritual awakening will come when the vast army of bivocational and lay leaders are released to be Kingdom agents ... in the marketplace of our continent," said Garner.

At 54, Losch has planted four churches, including his current pastorate, Mountain View Community Church in Richfield, Pa. He and his wife raised four children.

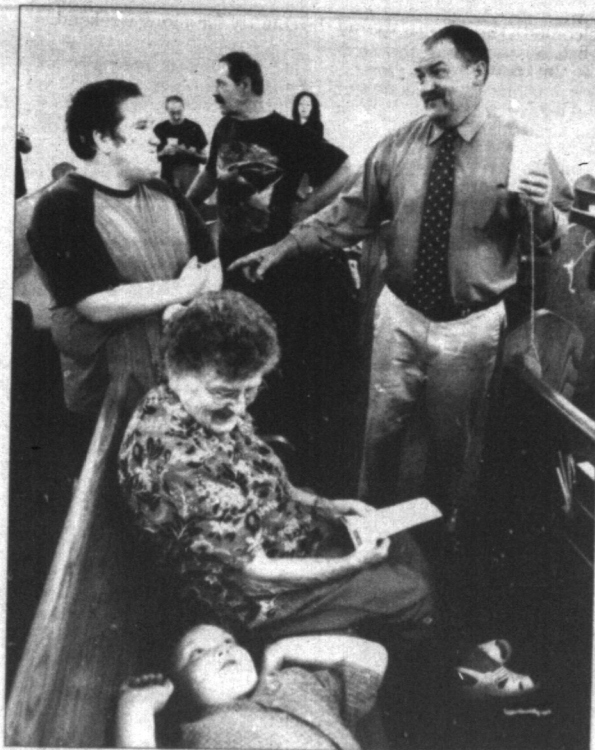
Losch's habit of keeping up with Facebook allowed him to lead an old friend to faith in Christ. It also helped a family make a major change. "We had a boy come to our VBS. Three years later he sent a friend request. I asked him if he was going to church. When he said no, I invited him. His entire family showed up. Three weeks later his dad came to say the entire family were giving their lives to Christ."

"My advice for anyone considering bivocational pastoring would be to do it," Losch said. "Make sure you are good at both preaching and working. It is hard work and you need to be good at what you do."

Soca agreed. "It can be challenging and tough," said Soca, "but at the same time I have learned to rely on the Holy Spirit. That's been a big lesson, a big growth area for me. You cannot do this in your own strength. You have to rely on God."



WEEKDAY SERVICE — Mountain View Community Church bivocational pastor Pusey Losch pauses from his construction of a pole barn to take a phone call, an occupational hazard. Losch, a painting contractor, supplements his income with carpentry when paint jobs are scarce. Mountain View Community church is located in Richfield, Pa. (BP photo)



SUNDAY SERVICE — Bivocational pastor Pusey Losch visits with members of Mountain View Community Church in Richfield, Pa., prior to Sunday worship service. Bivocational pastors like Losch face challenges to meet vocational, ministry, and family demands. (BP photo)

When I was told the other day that a Black couple who had planned to have their wedding at one of our Mississippi Baptist churches had filled out all of the required information, paid their deposit, and then were refused, I immediately had many questions. But I seemed to only feel pain before I found out any answers. The pain was deep. I was told about the situation days after the event had taken place, but hours before it was going to be aired as a television news item. Though I had no idea who they were I had pain for the couple and all of the family and friends that were involved.

I thought about my own children and their weddings. I wondered how you would go about dealing with that with all of the programs, flowers, photographers, caterers, and whatever else was involved that had to be changed. I thought about many of the people in the church who I knew, and most of them had nothing to do with the decision being made that they were about to hear on the news. It was a story about their church that seemed nothing like the church that they love and attend. I thought about the pastor who I know and appreciate because of his love for the Lord and care for people. He has always been such a fair-minded, right-hearted, and genuine servant. I wondered how this all came about and I felt pain.



Pain Persists

I thought about the small group of people who for whatever reason felt compelled to bring pressure on their pastor and to make sure that this couple would not be married in their church. Could they not see that this would be un-Christlike? It would bring dishonor to their church, community, and once again to our state. I hurt for them! I thought about the hundreds and, in fact, thousands of people across our state, Black and White, Indian and Asian, who have faithfully and diligently sought to be agents of care, love, and reconciliation

that would soon hear and feel the deep pain in their own hearts.

The laws of our state and our land declare that discrimination is not to live itself out among us. But we in the church bowed before the Lordship of Jesus live with an even higher standard than any law in our state or nation. In the days of Jesus, racial discrimination was a huge issue. Just a casual reading of the New Testament will find the tensions that existed between Jews and Gentiles. If Jesus had lived by the code of racial discrimination to this day all of us Gentiles, whether

Caucasian or Black, would be alienated from the things of God. The pain may persist and it could be worse.

So what do we do when you cannot un-tell the story, undo the decision, un-ring the bell? Well, we do what the Bible tells us to do. Repent! The word means to turn around, change your mind, and change your way of doing things. It is a great opportunity for all of us to ask Him to turn us around. But it does not stop there. We must repent in order to be restored and to be what God wants us to be. Maybe there are relationships that need to be restored, or our hearts need to be restored to do the work, or a restoration of who we are and what we are really here to do is needed.

Whatever He wants to do in us is what needs to be done. Will the pain persist? No doubt it will, but it can be relieved. It can be used of God to bring about good things in our hearts, in our churches, and in our state for the glory of Jesus. Although this may be one step backward, it can be a pathway to many steps in a new direction. I have heard from folks in the church, brothers and sisters in the Lord saying, "Let's take that new way!" Our redemptive Lord can bring change and blessings out of our chaos.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

CONTROVERSY

cont. from p. 1

"While there may be hurts, wrongs, and mistakes that must be addressed, the context for this to happen is in a historical church with a genuine caring pastor and thoughtful leaders who are seeking to do right. We, along with our entire body of faith, pray for them and stand ready to do anything that we can to help that church and that community."

Roger S. Oldham, vice president for convention communications and relations with the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, said the SBC affirms in Article 15 of its doctrinal Baptist Faith and Message that racism is against God's will.

"The convention's position on race relations is clear: In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism," Oldham said. "We are all saddened when any sin, including the sin of racism, rears its head in our midst. It is equally unfortunate when a group within a church seeks to determine church policy without giving the church an opportunity to discuss the matter and take formal action as a congregation."

First Church, Crystal Springs, is in national and international headlines because a black couple, Charles and Te'Andrea Wilson, was forced to move their wedding to a second location just one day prior to the event. First Church's pastor, Stan Weatherford, conducted the wedding July 21 at a nearby African American church, telling the Wilsons some members of the 150-year-old First Church objected to the wedding because it involved a black couple.

"This [the wedding of a black couple] had not, had never been done here before, so it was set-

ting a new precedent, and there were those who reacted to that because of that," Weatherford told WLBT-TV in Jackson. "I didn't want to have a controversy within the church and I certainly didn't want a controversy to affect the wedding of Charles and Te'Andrea. I wanted to make sure that their wedding day was a special day."

According to news reports, five or six First Church members, who had not been identified as of press time, objected to the wedding. Weatherford's

job was on the line, according to the Wilsons.

They "had decided that no black couple had been married at their church and that if he went on to... marry us, then they would vote him out and he would be put out of the church," Charles Wilson told WLBT.

The couple had been attending the church — Te'Andrea for one year and Charles for one month — but had not officially joined. Te'Andrea's father is a member of the church and her uncle is a custodial employee,

according to news reports.

Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said that while there may be valid reasons a couple may be denied a church wedding, "the race or ethnicity of that couple is never a valid reason."

Numerous members of First Church, Crystal Springs, have expressed dismay that a few members could bar the wedding. At the July 29 worship service at the church, a deacon read a joint statement from the

church's deacons.

"Our many ministries here are open to everyone and have been for many years. We would never consider doing otherwise," the deacon said, according to the Jackson Clarion-Ledger newspaper. "In the coming days and weeks our congregation will gather as a body of believers to pray and seek God's blessing and direction as we move forward. We will ask for forgiveness where God reveals it is necessary and for His guidance as we look to the future of our congregation."

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Special Edition

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

II Corinthians 8:1-7

"...themselves, they gave first to the Lord." (v5)

• Unexpected giving cannot be measured in dollars and cents...Pray for a deeper level of surrender to the Lordship of Christ.

"...they pleaded for the privilege of sharing." (v6)

• Unexpected giving cannot be coerced...Pray for missional willingness to overcome your fear and selfishness.

"...they gave...beyond their ability." (v3)

• Unexpected giving cannot be limited to affordability...Pray for your church to set a challenging offering goal, and recalculate your gift ceiling.

"...they gave themselves...by the will of God also to us." (v5)

• Unexpected giving cannot be completed alone...Pray for missionaries, mobilizers, volunteers, and the beneficiaries of Margaret Lackey ministries.

"...see that you also excel in this grace of giving." (v7)

• Unexpected giving cannot be effective apart from God's grace...Pray for God to accomplish something unexpected in your heart, your community, and your church through the Margaret Lackey Offering emphasis.

Prayer points

unexpected

grace overflowing in rich generosity

"...their overflowing joy ... welled up in rich generosity... They gave themselves first of all to the Lord ..."

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

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Mission
Volunteers



New Church
Starts



Community
Mission
Projects



Disaster
Relief



Cross
Cultural
Evangelism



Language/
Cultural
Ministry



ON THE RAMPARTS
— David Hays, pas-
tor of Union Church,
Raleigh, and Tony
Keys, pastor of First
Church, Mize, were
seen on China's Great
Wall during a ministry
trip to East Asia. The
two offered training to
pastors and other lead-
ers in two Chinese cities.
(Special to The Baptist
Record)

Pastors offer training in East Asia

Tony Martin
Associate Editor

When David Hays, pas-
tor of Union Church, Ru-
leigh, and Tony Keys, pastor
of First Church, Mize, were
given the opportunity to of-
fer training to church lead-
ers in East Asia, neither man
realized what a blessing they
were to be — nor what a bless-
ing they would receive.

I saw Ken Rhodes (direc-
tor of the Missions Mobiliza-
tion Department, Mississippi
Baptist Convention Board) at
a conference and he said, "You
need to go to China," and I was
like, yeah, I'll pray about that,"
Hays said. "About a month
later he asked me again. So I
really prayed about it and felt
like it was the thing I needed
to do. So I called Tony to see
if he'd consider going with
me. We started working and
preparing, and we taught the
book of Hebrews. In October
of 2011 we flew out."

"We flew into Beijing," Keys
said, "but our actual work was
in Shenyang and Harbin, two
of the smaller cities in China
— about ten million and twelve
million. We did a conference
in both of those cities."

"We did a four day confer-
ence in Shenyang, with about
forty church leaders," Hays
said, "and in Harbin, we did
a three day conference with
about thirty leaders."

The leaders being trained
were not necessarily pas-
tors in the conventional
sense. "A church over there
might have 12 people, a lot of
house churches," Hays said.
"In one case, there were two
young ladies in their 20's
who had started a group on

their college campus. You
saw a lot of that."

"There were a lot of people
from urban settings," said
Keys, "but there were others
who had literally traveled days
to be there, from churches in
little villages. It was the pursuit
of Christian experience."

There was a marked dif-
ference between cities," Keys
continued. "In Harbin, we
actually met in a church. We met
these pastors, a young fellow,
and they were very open about
their faith. In Shenyang, we
met in a couple of different
locations, none of them two
days in a row, simply because
the church was under a lot
more stress because of some
oppression. Harbin is a lot
more Western."

"Neither of us are theo-
logians," Keys said. "But we
faithfully took Hebrews with
us and presented it as clearly
as we could. It didn't stop with
Hebrews."

"Our goal was to equip pas-
tors who don't have the re-
sources we have," Hays said.
"They can't come from Life-
Way or from Amazon. They
don't have those luxuries."

"It became a brotherhood, a
fellowship, very quickly," Keys
said. "Despite the language
barrier — neither of us speaks
any Chinese — we grew very
close to them within a day or
so. We ended both conferences
with laying on of hands and
prayer. After they had prayed,
there were literally pools of
tears on the floor."

"Not tears over mate-
rial things," said Hays. "It
was tears over the church-
es, over lostness. The two
young ladies were praying
for greater evangelism."

"We may be people who
pray," Hays said, "but these
were praying people. They
were praying that the Jews be
saved in Israel."

"They prayed for North Ko-
rea," Keys said. "They pointed
to the map and said they were
praying for Iran. They said,
we can go to those places
where you cannot. We can
reach Iran with the gospel."

"I thought, 'I don't need
to be training these people,'"
Hays said. "I need to be learn-
ing from them."

"Margaret Lackey money
was one reason we were able
to go," Hays continued. "We
paid plenty out of our pocket,
but the state missions
money was what made the
difference."

"When we train 40 church
leaders," Hays stated, "those
40 leaders are going to go back
to their churches and are go-
ing to teach what we taught."

"These 40 would contact
other pastors," Keys added.

"The impact we would have
— those 40 would teach others,
who would teach others, with
hundreds or thousands being
impacted," said Hays. "And
this is a group of people who
can't simply get on a website
or order a commentary. Our
goal was to give them tools
they could use to train other
people. If you don't believe in
doing this, you haven't read
the New Testament."

"It shouldn't take any more
encouragement to do this
than we've already been given,"
Keys said. "If we choose
to ignore this encouragement,
we do so at our own peril. A
righteous and sovereign God
doesn't just give suggestions
to his servants."

their overflowing joy welled up in rich generosity. They gav

Offering for State Missions

Mississippi couple builds longhouses and relational bridges in Malaysia

Tony Martin
Associate Editor

In August of 2011, Susie and Doug Powers, Sunrise Church, Carthage, had the opportunity to minister in Sarawak, Malaysia. Ken Rhodes, director of the Missions Mobilization department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, gave the couple the initial information about the opportunity.

"We'd been on a trip to Peru," Susie said, "and I told Doug, 'I want to go back.' I couldn't get Peru off my mind. I'd contacted Mr. Rhodes, and he told me that the next project coming up was a trip to Sarawak to work on building a longhouse. One thing led to another. I met with Ken, and he contacted the missionary in Sarawak. I wanted to know if this was a 'man project.' But the missionary said that I could minister to the women and the children. So that's what I did. And it was unbelievable."

"Boy, did we work. We poured over a hundred yards of concrete while we were there," Doug said. "When we got there, they were mixing concrete by hand. We did that the first day, but an anonymous donor had given one of the leaders some money and told him, 'If you need anything while you're down there, get what you need.' So we bought a little concrete mixer. That helped us, but we still had to get the materials to the machine. It was amazing to see how God gave us the strength to do this, because none of us did that kind of physical, hard work every day. A lot of those guys were in their sixties, but no one complained, and the temperature was 98-plus."

In addition to the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering funds which went toward the ministry trip, Vacation Bible School offerings from almost thirty churches across the state were used to buy the materials for the longhouses — brick, sand, gravel, and the mortar mix. Materials were delivered by the truckload. The longhouse — which was built as a multi-family dwelling — was over 500 feet long and cost approximately \$27,000.

"Not only did we work on the longhouse, but while we were there we were building relation-



MISSISSIPPI MEETS MALAYSIA — Susie and Doug Powers, members of Sunrise Church, Carthage, are shown before a dilapidated longhouse near Sarawak, Malaysia. The Powers were part of a team which helped build a longhouse designed to house 23 families. (Special to The Baptist Record)

ships," said Doug. "People wondered why we were there to help them build their homes, so we were able to share Jesus with them at that point."

"We left a big chunk of our hearts over there," Susie said. "We cried when we left. I bawled every day."

"Those people were so giving," Doug said. "They were so selfless."

The team stayed at Roban Baptist Church, with a congregation of about thirty. While the team was there, the church was host to over one hundred people during their services.

Susie ministered to the children, who were out of school for part of the time; the team was on the field because of a Muslim holiday. When the children went back to school, she was able to minister to the mothers.

"They taught me how to cook," she said. "They have nothing, considering what we have. No electricity, no water. They cook over a fire, and bathe with rainwater caught in tubs."

"They eat most anything they can get off the land," Doug said. "They'd fix it for us."

Their old longhouse was about to collapse," said Susie. "Actually, it did collapse later. But another team came behind us, and completed the longhouse we were working on."

The new longhouse was about a half-mile from the ocean. "We walked to the seashore one day," Susie said. "It was beautiful. They have spiral seashells that look like Christmas ornaments. When the kids

found out I liked seashells, the kids got a handmade rubber basket they gave me, and filled it full of shells. I probably brought back ten pounds of shells."

"We're hoping to go back and build another longhouse," Doug said.

One thing that was great about being in the same location, the same place every day, was getting to know the people," Susie said. "I was able to learn the children's names, which child went with which mama, and when we go back this fall we'll get to see these people again. 'Several folks came to know Christ,' Doug stated.

The longhouse held 23 families. Out of that group, only three families were believers. "But a lot of them came on that last Sunday," Doug said.

Malaysia is "pretty badly suppressed" spiritually, Doug noted. "The churches are monitored, and they make the kids pray to Allah when they go to school. It's just a different place to do evangelism — they are raised in Buddhist or Muslim culture. It goes all the way down to their core."

"One of my crafts over there was making salvation bracelets," Susie said, "and the pastor was able to translate for me and help the kids understand salvation."

"Once you get over there," Susie said, "you see how God works. You know you're in His will."

"If somebody doesn't go tell them," Doug said, "they may never know."

Discovering Ministry Opportunities

Mission Volunteers — \$625,000

Margaret Lackey scholarships helped send out over 1,500 volunteers last year. Let us connect your church to an unreached people group through a Southern Baptist missionary engagement team anywhere in the world. For more information call Ken Rhodes at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3239.

Garaywa — \$400,000

Garaywa Camp & Conference Center hosted almost 1,500 youngsters last summer and 107 made professions of faith. Over 40 others made new commitments to missions involvement. For more information contact Kay Cassibry at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3318.

Central Hills — \$400,000

Horseback riding, canoeing, and mission enrichment classes encouraged 156 boys to make professions of faith last summer. Pray that God will call out leaders for the next generation from these guys and over 4,000 other participants at Central Hills. For more information call Jim Ray at (662) 289-9730.

New Church Starts — \$175,000

Unreached people live right next door. Almost two million folks in Mississippi have no church home. Pray for them and for new church planters and for the network coaches who train planters. Margaret Lackey helped fund six new church starts last year. For more information call Johnny Ervin at (800) 749-1651 or (601) 292-3224.

Community Mission Projects — \$175,000

Margaret Lackey met community needs for evangelism and compassion ministries across Mississippi by helping fund almost 100 crusades, block parties, and mission fairs last year. For more information call David Michel at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3231.

Disaster Relief — \$50,000

Nearly 300 first responders are trained by Margaret Lackey every year. These volunteers link us with Baptist Global Response so we can participate in the Southern Baptist disaster relief network here and around the world. For more information call Jim Didlake at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3338.

Criminal Justice Ministries — \$60,000

Your Margaret Lackey gifts offer spiritual freedom through forgiveness in Christ and Biblical study materials for prisoners. Mississippi Baptists help train volunteers for local jails and inmate ministers to reach out to the 25,000 offenders in Mississippi's prison system. For more information call Charles Jones at (662) 721-0264 or John Henry at (601) 508-0293.

College Outreach — \$30,000

University campuses in Mississippi are becoming international destinations, with growing numbers of students who come from across the United States and around the world. Margaret Lackey helps to fund student interns who work in ethnic and international student ministry. For more information call Weaver McCracken at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3302.

Christian Women's/Christian Men's Job Corps® — \$20,000

Christian mentors and job skill training are helping more than 700 participants at 15 different sites across our state. Margaret Lackey helps fund a state coordinator and training for CWJC/CMJC site leaders. For more information call Tammy Anderson at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3232 or Sandra Nash at (601) 924-9205.

Cross Cultural Evangelism — \$20,000

Mississippi Baptists worship in seven different languages every Sunday. Chicanos, Asians, and Hispanics are our neighbors. Thirty-seven percent of our population is African American. Margaret Lackey gifts help provide leadership training and mission strategy development for every culture. For more information call David Michel at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3231.

Language/Deaf Ministry — \$20,000

Margaret Lackey trains ministry specialists to teach adult reading and writing courses, chronological Bible storying, and sign language. For more information about Language Ministry call Paula Smith at (800) 748-1651 or (601) 292-3336, and for information about Deaf Ministry call Jim Booth at (601) 201-3361.

Port Ministry — \$15,000

More than 7,000 international seafarers from nearly 40 countries visit Mississippi each year. More than 100 sailors made a profession of faith last year as a result of ministries supported by Margaret Lackey. For more information call Adrian Turner/Pascagoula at (228) 623-0103 or Steve Mooneyham/Gulfport at (228) 832-4311.

Offering Goal: \$2,000,000

...themselves first of all to the Lord ... from 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Garaywa Camp, changing lives

Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Why do Mississippi Baptists do camp ministry? For those who are leaders in the work at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center, this is an easy question.

Jessica Morrison, who is responsible for program and guest services at Garaywa, states: "We had 1,124 campers come to camp this summer. Some campers come to camp because it's part of a family tradition. Others come because they need a fun week away from home and still others come because they want to learn more and meet new people. No matter the reason that the girls come, our prayer for each camper is that they will leave with a better understanding of the gospel and a deep desire to share what they've learned with everyone around them."

Kay Cassibry, Executive Director-Treasurer, Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union, shares: "First and foremost, we do camp because we want to give our young ladies a place where they can come and maybe be introduced to Jesus for the first time—who He is and who He can be in their lives, how their lives can be changed. What we are finding in the last few years is that we are getting kids from broken homes. Some of these kids are living in situations we can barely imagine. I have heard more than once kids say, 'For the first time ever someone has treated me like I was somebody special. They treated me like they cared about who I was. They didn't know just my name—they wanted to know all about me. They took care of me. They kept me safe.' And for many of these kids, they go back into homes where they never hear that. So if we can give them that kind of experience in this atmosphere, we're going to do it."

"So first and foremost, we want them to know who Jesus is and give them the chance to give their lives to Him. Many of the girls are already Christians—they come from good churches and good families. Yet even at this early age, God is dealing with them as to what they are going to do with their lives."

"I was saved at RA camp," said Roddy Reed, manager at Garaywa. "I understand why we do camp. The children need Jesus more and more. What I see now is that kids are dealing with issues I never would have dreamed of as a kid. They come to camp and they feel safe and secure. They can open up and let those problems come out. We're about teaching

them Jesus and missions, but they can see how to have a strong relationship with God. Jesus loves them and cares for them."

"We have a note from a camper written at a campfire program where one girl said, 'I love this place and the love that Garaywa shows.' Her father had died, and while it didn't give all the details, she had come to camp with all these problems and had experienced Jesus and His love here."

"One of my favorite stories from the summer was when one camper came to let us know that she understood what it meant to be a Christian and had already made that decision, but now she understood that no matter where she is, she has to be sharing the gospel," Morrison stated. "Her parents were here that week as our missionaries, and the best moment was seeing her run to tell them that she understood why her family does what they do and that she wanted to commit to being a missionary as well."

"The girls are challenged to learn that God has a special plan for their lives, just for them," Cassibry said. "They do so many group activities, but they also realize that God has uniquely gifted them. One dad came up to me and said, 'My daughter came back with such a unique understanding of worship. I expected her to learn about missions, but she's understanding worship—I can see it in her face, I can see it in her eyes.' They are introduced to missionaries who serve around the world and here in the U.S., so they can learn what God may be calling them to do."

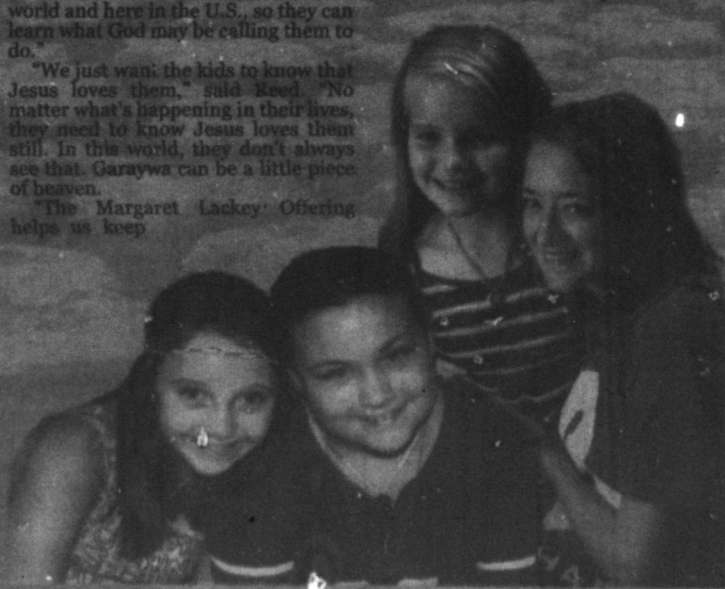
"We just want the kids to know that Jesus loves them," said Reed. "No matter what's happening in their lives, they need to know Jesus loves them still. In this world, they don't always see that. Garaywa can be a little piece of heaven."

"The Margaret Lackey Offering helps us keep

down our overall cost," Reed continued. "A week of camp is \$165, whereas weeks at other camps can cost three to four hundred dollars. Over sixty years, from 1947 to 2006, we've had 120,000 kids involved in summer camps, with 233,000 other guests. And this hasn't been due to one person—God's hand has been on Garaywa."

Cassibry is quick to credit the summer staff for much of Garaywa's success. "These girls go on to the mission field, into ministry positions, on to seminary—they come away from the summer having grown. We do Bible studies with them. These college kids today—they're going to fix things. They are willing to pay the price. And they don't care to choose the easy way out. If they are convinced that God is calling them out for ministry, you can't stop them. They are so aware of social issues like human trafficking that they will find ways to help people out, find ways to be Jesus to these people. I'm proud to know them. And I am proud that Garaywa gives them an avenue that while they are ministering to the campers, their own lives are being enriched by the campers and each other. These are avenues to help them decide, 'What's God calling me to do?'"

"There are numerous reasons why we do what we do at Garaywa, but the main reason is that we know that God always moves and calls more people to Himself," Morrison said. "We are blessed to be a part of everything He does here and will continue to do in this place."



Margaret Lackey Offering of Woman's Missionary Union, August 2006

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College News

Over 400 students will receive degrees at **William Carey University** in one of four graduation ceremonies in August. Dr. Jimmy King, president of WCU, will preside at the ceremonies, which are for undergraduate and graduate students of the New Orleans, Hattiesburg, and Trion campuses. The ceremony for students on the New Orleans campus is August 3, at 6 p.m. in the Chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The speaker for the ceremony is William "Bill" Ray, president and CEO of the Asbury Foundation of Hattiesburg, Inc. The ceremony for Hattiesburg students receiving undergraduate degrees is August 4 at 10:30 a.m. in Smith Auditorium. The speaker for the 9:30 ceremony is Mary Graham, president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. The ceremony for Trion students receiving

undergraduate degrees is August 4 at 1 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. The speaker is Gordon Sansing, director of church relations for Mississippi Baptist Hospital in Jackson. The ceremony for Tradition campus students receiving both graduate and undergraduate degrees is August 4 at 4 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. Judge Keith Starrett, United States District Court Judge for the Southern District of Mississippi, will serve as the guest speaker for the Tradition graduation. For more graduation information, call the Office of the Registrar at (601) 318-6195.

The Winters School of Music at **William Carey University** will host a concert featuring premier concert organist Walt Strony of the Allen Organ Company on August 30 in Smith Auditorium at 7 p.m. The concert is open to the public and free of charge.

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs reaffirmed the national accreditation for **Mississippi College's** School of Business at its June 17 meeting in Baltimore, Maryland.

Eighty-three-year-old Kosciusko native Edward McMillan stepped down July 31 after two decades of distinguished service as executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission. A former history professor and graduate studies dean at **Mississippi College**, McMillan is beloved on and off the Clinton campus. Based at the Leland Speed Library, the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission preserves extensive information on Baptist church ministers, membership rolls, cemeteries, historical displays and other data going back more than 200 years.

Revivals & Homecomings

Center Hill Church, Hamilton: Revival, Aug. 5 - 8; Sun., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. nightly; Lloyd Sweatt, speaker; Brandon Hardon, music; Terry Edwards, pastor.

Society Hill Church, Oakdale: Revival, Aug. 5 - 9; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Wade Barnes, speaker; Ralph Sanford, interim pastor.

Linn Church, Doddsville: Homecoming, Aug. 5, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Jimmy McLendon, speaker; Susanne McLendon, music.

Rocky Springs Church, Yazoo Association: Revival and 154th homecoming, Aug. 3 - 5; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.; Charles Harris, speaker; Will Edgar, music.

Murphy Creek Church, Winston County: Revival, Aug. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Paul Blanchard, speaker; Don Wallace, music; Walter Simmons, pastor.

Tallahoma Church, Laurel: Homecoming, Aug. 5; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and music with Dixie River, 1:30 p.m.; Allen Nix, speaker.

Rocky Springs Church, Yazoo: Revival, Aug. 3 - 4, 7 p.m.; homecoming, Aug. 5, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Charlie Harris, speaker; Will Edgar and Mary Holt, music.

Steep Hollow Church, Poplarville: Youth revival, Aug. 8 - 10, 6:30 p.m.; Blake Anderson, speaker.

Shiloh Church, Carroll County: Revival, Aug. 3 - 5; Fri., 6:45 p.m. with fellowship supper and comedy from guest speaker; Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mickey Dalrymple, speaker; Doug Warren, music.

First Church, Lake: Revival, Aug. 5 - 8; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Robert Rowzee, speaker; Jerry Peagler, music; Ken McLemore, pastor.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

S R P T E A S J I O T Y X H , T P P A V E V S E P V ;

H O S J G J Y G S L S X D N G O G O V F S N R V S W

G I N J Z E O .

E H T P X H W S I G A - H V F V Y : S Y V

Clue: V = E

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Ten Twenty-Eight

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Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Vacation Bible School



MT. CARMEL, SMITH COUNTY ASSOCIATION: Six professions of faith.



ROUNDAWAY CHURCH, DODDSVILLE: June 3-8; enrollment, 75; six professions of faith; \$487 mission offering.

In other VBS News:

► **Pine Hill Church, Enterprise:** June 28 - July 1; two professions of faith; \$454.07 offering collected for the Baptist Children's Village.

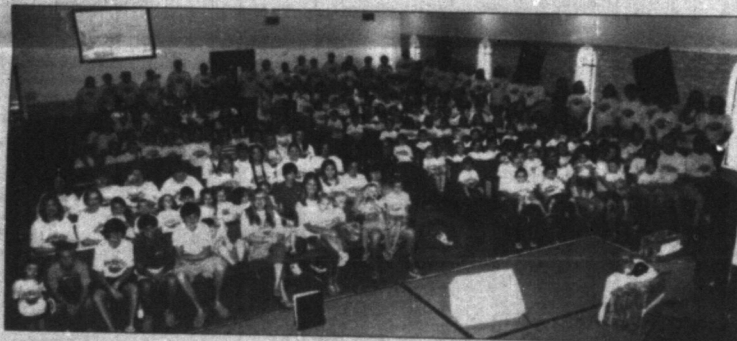
► **Arlington Church, Bogue Chitto:** Enrollment, 109; 10 professions of faith; DeDe Nunery, director.



BUNKER HILL CHURCH, COLUMBIA: June 4-8.



CALVARY CHURCH, SUMMIT: June 18-22; high attendance 111; Kody Tullios, VBS director; Floyd Davis, pastor; shown are music leader Brittney Hicks and assistants Alexis Phillips and Victoria Courty.



FREDONIA CHURCH, NEW ALBANY

MS POSITIONS

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOLLY SPRINGS, MS IN SEARCH OF A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. If interested, please e-mail your resume to kristual@yahoo.com

FBC MATHISTON, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC/ASSOCIATE PASTOR. Please mail resumes to P. O. Box 268, Mathiston, MS 39752 or e-mail to mathistonfbc@bellsouth.net.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SUMMIT, MS SEEKS A PART TIME PRESCHOOL MINISTRY DIRECTOR to oversee the Preschool Ministry of the church in coordination with the children's minister. Experience leading children is required, and a college degree is preferred. Please send resumes to Dean Pearce at dean@fbcsummit.org.

HIGHPOINTE BAPTIST CHURCH, RAYMOND, MS. IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH. This is a small church with a loving heart and great potential. Please send resumes to jerryfilesr@gmail.com; or call (601) 259-2248; or mail to 4543 Learned Rd., Raymond, MS 39154.

LEMOYNE BLVD. BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A PART TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Please contact Alan Kuhn at 228-861-8152 or send resume to: Lemoine Blvd. Baptist Church, 15005 LeMoine Blvd., Biloxi, MS 39532.

EAST PLEASANT GROVE, QUITMAN IS SEEKING A BI VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH. Send resumes to 4126 CR 672 Quitman, Ms 39355, attention Pastor, or e-mail to Pastor Josh Meadows @ j.meadows@rocketmail.com

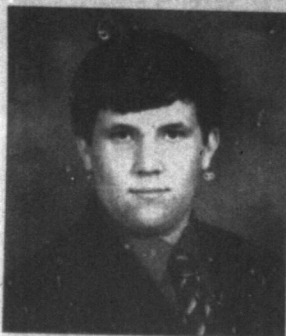
LILLY ORCHARD BAPTIST CHURCH is searching for God's man to shepherd and pastor it. Resumes to PO Box 598, Escatawpa, MS 39552

UNION HALL BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR. Resumes may be mailed to the church at: 1242 Nola Road N. E., Brookhaven, MS 39601 Attention: Youth Director Search Committee.

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN OAK GROVE IS SEEKING A PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER. We will be taking resumes now-August 10. Send resumes to calvarychildrenssearch@yahoo.com.

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Just for the Record



WHEELER GROVE CHURCH, ALCORN COUNTY, licensed James Austin Young to the preaching ministry July 1.



FIRST CHURCH, FANNIN, held ordination services for student pastor Jeff Byrd July 22. Shown are Tony Bales, Misty Byrd, Byrd, Michael Brister, and Ron Bird.

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Trivial Pursuit • Judges 13:24-25; 16:4-5, 15-17, 19-20, 28-30

"Trivial Pursuit" is the name of a game popular a few years ago. In order to win the game, a player had to master a million bits of trivial information. "Trivial Pursuit" also could be an apt description for the way most people spend their time. In order to demonstrate fidelity to the LORD during crises, our study theme for this unit, believers must refuse to get caught up in insignificant quests. The goal of this week's lesson is to help adults distinguish between trivial pursuits and worthy goals. Then they can decide on at least one worthy goal in which they will invest their God-given abilities.

1. Empowered by the Lord (Judg. 13:24-25)

Does everyone have God-given abilities? According to the Bible the answer is yes. Samson, our character study this week, is a case in point. He was born by divine appointment and consecrated from birth as a Nazirite (Judg. 13:1-23; NIV). From birth, "the LORD blessed him" (13:24) and "the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him" (13:25). The Hebrew word rendered "blessed" (13:24) included the idea of the LORD's empowerment to accomplish a purpose. According to Paul (1 Cor. 12:4, 11), the same Spirit distributes different kinds of gifts to each person as He determines.

Why does God give people abilities and gifts? The answer is to serve Him and to accomplish His purposes. In Samson's day the greatest need God's people had was to

be delivered from the Philistine oppression. God uniquely equipped Samson to accomplish that task. Today, the LORD empowers all of His children with specific gifts to accomplish His purpose through them.

2. Enticed to Trifle with God's Gifts (Judg. 16:4-5, 15-17)

How did Samson utilize his God-given abilities? He engaged in trivial pursuits, failing to take his Nazirite status seriously.

Nazirites were set apart to serve the LORD in special ways (Numb. 6:1-21). Yet Samson succumbed to Delilah's enticements (16:4-18). Instead of taking God's call to be a deliverer seriously, he used his power in trifling ways to break bowstrings (Judg. 16:7-9), to break new ropes (16:10-12), and to disentangle himself from a loom (16:13-14). Samson no doubt thought he was "being cute" using his God-given power in meaningless displays of strength. He did not perceive Delilah was trying to trap him.

For her part, Delilah feigned to question Samson's love (16:15) and relentlessly

nagged him day after day (16:16). When Samson had heard enough, he revealed the special character of the Nazirite vow (16:17). He told the truth, but he lacked even a modicum of spiritual discretion.

3. Blinded by Spiritual Insensitivity (Judg. 16:19-20)

Samson's folly resulted in the squandering of his God-given strength (16:19). When threatened with the crisis of capture,

he thought to shake himself free. Unfortunately, "he did not know the LORD had left him" (16:20).

Though Christians can fail as miserably as Samson, thankfully Jesus has promised us eternal life based on His righteousness (John 10:27-29). Yet, our failures grieve the Spirit as much as Samson's did (Eph. 4:30). Samson became so spiritually insensitive "he did not know the LORD had left him." Although we never lose the Spirit's indwelling presence today, we need to avoid becoming so spiritually insensitive the LORD can no longer work through us.

4. Victorious Through Faith (Judg. 16:28-30)

Samson, almost but not too late, realized the error of his ways and prayed to the LORD for help (Judg. 16:28a). He acknowledged God as the source of his strength and asked to be strengthened just enough to bring judgment on the Philistines (16:28b). God granted Samson's request because he had decided to use his God-given strength to accomplish God's purpose of delivering His people from their Philistine oppressors. As Samson's hands rested upon the pillars of the temple of the Philistine god, Dagon, the strength of the LORD coursed through his veins. Samson was empowered supernaturally to destroy the temple of the false god, to kill the rulers and people, and to end the forty year Philistine oppression of Israel (16:29-30).

So also today, the LORD still works through imperfect people who place their faith in Him. Knowing this truth, we can humble ourselves in prayer to the LORD, asking him to guide our steps. What better way to start our day than to ask the LORD to show us how to use our God-given abilities for His glory? When we do, we will say "good-bye" to trivial pursuits.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

Make No Excuses • Jeremiah 1:1-19

My grandmother was a voracious reader of good books which focused on the God of The Good Book. As she selected her next text, she would say, "Don't know why in the world folks waste their reading time on soap operas and shoot-em-ups! One title on her shelf always caught my attention: 'Here Am I Lord, Send Aaron.' Familiar with the story of Moses at the burning bush, I could picture him standing there at the foot of Mt. Sinai with the words of that book title in a little cartoon conversation bubble above his head. He would be staring sheepishly toward Heaven with one hand on his chest and the other pointing toward his elder brother. What's your excuse?"

Gideon was the runt of the litter in his tribe of Manasseh. God handed him a tiny army and a flaming torch and a clay pot and called him a valiant warrior. David was the baby of his family. His brothers were soldiers in the army of King Saul. He was a song-writing shepherd boy. God gave him a stone and a sling and placed him before a giant. Zacheus was a wee little (evil, hateful) man. God planted a tree for him to climb long before Jesus was to pass through his town of Jericho. Peter was a commercial fisherman. Jesus invaded his yielded heart, commandeered

his available boat, handed him gospel bait and filled his clean, mended nets with people. What's your excuse?

The call of God to salvation is His invitation to come to Him, warts and all. Subsequently, the call of God to serve Him includes His perfect plan to provide for

and overcome our perceived shortcomings. God is filled with "I Am" assurances that immediately negate our "But, Lord" complaints. The One Who calls us is the One Who made us and the One Who desires to use us. Dare we even entertain the remote thought that He is unable to prop us up on our leaning side? What's your excuse?

Jeremiah had clearly heard the voice of God calling him into service. His daddy was a priest. His granddaddy was a priest. Maybe he was planning to slide right on into his "expected" duties as a chip off the old priest. Instead, God rocked his world

with a radical plan. Jeremiah was chosen by God BEFORE BIRTH to be a public square prophet for God, not a temple-bound priest of God. He was to stand for truth in an age and culture that matches our most recent 24 hour news cycle.

Jeremiah lived and ministered about six hundred years before Christ. A century before, his kindred nation of Israel had been destroyed by the nation of Assyria. In snap-to-it

quick step, his beloved nation of Judah was marching from a slow fade into idolatry and rebellion toward a quick slide of destruction and exile. During his ministry, Jeremiah would witness the last few kings of Judah crash and burn. The revival fires during the reign of young King Josiah would fizzle out in false humility and sizzle one last time as the temple was burned by the armies of Babylon.

The name "Jeremiah" means God hurls

or throws. With better than Nolan Ryan speed and accuracy, God pitched Jeremiah right into the middle of the fray in Jerusalem. He was swung at, hit, fouled and missed. God used Jeremiah's life to call sin a pop-up out and to rule truth to be safe at the plate. God promised His Word, His power, His presence and His message. Oswald Chambers testified that "God is preparing me for what He is preparing for me to do for Him." Jeremiah never read a copy of "My Utmost for His Highest." Jeremiah had a meeting with the LORD of the uttermost Who sent him to the gutter-most on behalf of others-most and for the glory of God Most High.

Yes, Lord, I hear what You are saying. But Lord, I can't do this! I'm just a young whipper-snapper. God said to Jeremiah: Go where I send you. I will be there. Do what I command you. I will give you strength. Say what I tell you. I will give you the words. The job will be difficult. The outcome will not be pleasant. The people won't listen. The enemies will attack. I will be with you to deliver you. We protest. God protects and projects. What's MY excuse?

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



OLYMPICS

cont. from p. 1

city's large Polish community, the Shaws had served nine years in Rzeszów, Poland, as church planters, deep in the language and culture there. They were set to return to their former country of service after Shaw worked a stint in the stateside offices of

the IMB, and they were praying about what city to return to in Poland.

In the course of work he was doing for the IMB's Global Research Department, though, Shaw passed through London several times.

"We were getting ready to come back to Poland," Marcy Shaw recounted. "We were praying over it, but every time Doug

traveled through London he'd come back and say, 'You wouldn't believe all the Polish there. Everywhere I go, they're all speaking Polish. My waiters were Polish, the people on the bus were Polish, the people on the underground were Polish, the people in the stores were Polish.'"

The pair began praying that God would send someone to England to work with Poles, "and

God said, 'Yeah, OK, I'll send you,'" Marcy Shaw recounted.

The fact that the Shaws speak Polish smoothes the way for connecting with Poles in London.

"We can meet people really easily," Marcy said. "It's unusual for the English or for Americans to speak their language. When we were studying in Poland, they would say, 'Wow, most Americans expect us to learn English

and you're learning Polish,' so it really had an effect on them."

One would think that the Shaws have their hands full with Polish work, so why are they also supporting the logistics for Southern Baptist volunteers for the Olympics?

Shaw laughs about how he came to be in charge. "I asked my supervisor, 'Are we doing something for the Olympics?'"

Just for the Record



MT. VERNON CHURCH, EUPORA, had a Men's Resolution Ceremony June 17, based on the movie *Courageous*. Men signing the resolution included Redale Oswalt, Dale Strickland, Thomas Huffman, Charles Blackston, Huelon Barnett, David Morelan, and Bill Dean.

In other Church News:

► **Holly Church, Corinth**, is hosting a Monster Garage Men's Night Aug. 11, 5:30 p.m., with meal and door prizes. \$5. Tommy Bowden, speaker.

Eight ladies from the **WMU of SILVER CREEK CHURCH, PIKE COUNTY**, toured the relocated Crisis Pregnancy Center in McComb and delivered money collected for the center's "Baby Bottle Boomerang Project."



MT. NELSON CHURCH, NE-SHOBA COUNTY, recognized pastor Tom McCurley for 50 years of ministry. Shown are McCurley and his wife, Donna.



NEW PROSPECT CHURCH, OXFORD, ordained Jay Parks to the ministry June 24. Shown are Ken White, Parks, April Parks, and Ronald Meeks. Parks is pastor of Antioch Church, Bruce.



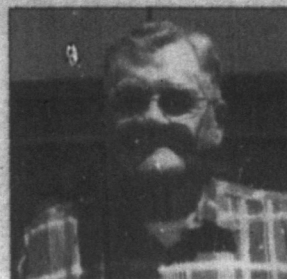
MACEDONIA CHURCH, BLUE MOUNTAIN, recently ordained Jamie Miller, left, and Joey Manley, right, as deacons.



GOODWATER CHURCH, MEEHAN, honored Gloria Allen July 22 with a reception upon her retirement after more than 55 years as organist.



TRINITY CHURCH, MONROE COUNTY, had six RAs attend the Area 2 event, Missions Madness: Under the Big Top at First Church, Fulton. Attendees were Hunter McNeese, Dylan Christian, Chance McNeese, Brandon Denton, Dalton Cantrell, and Ryan Christian.



CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, honored all fathers on Father's Day with a special treat from the Children's Department. Melvin Allen, the oldest father present, was presented a gift certificate.



GAS FROM ENTERPRISE CHURCH, ENTERPRISE, recently attended camp at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton.

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